



EPISCOPAL NEWS SERVICE

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CONTENTS	PAGE
■ ENS DIGEST	1
■ Church leaders meet with President Clinton, hail new openness to their concerns (93055)	5
■ Church activists discover 'new receptiveness' in Washington (93056)	7
■ Religious leaders issue urgent appeal in support of Salvadoran Truth Commission (93057)	8
■ New denomination consecrates former Episcopal priests as bishops (93058)	10
■ Consultation will set ecumenical agenda for the future (93059)	12
■ NEWSBRIEFS (93060)	14
■ NEWSFEATURES	
Satellite technology links Episcopal cathedrals in new network (93062)	19

Russian priest dreams of a restored military
chaplaincy (93063)

22

■ REVIEWS AND RESOURCES (93064)

26



news digest

93055D

Church leaders meet with President Clinton, hail new openness to their concerns

A group of the nation's top religious leaders met March 24 with President Bill Clinton and emerged from the hour-long meeting clearly buoyed by what they characterized as a new openness to the church's moral agenda.

"This president has made himself and his administration accessible to us and to others," said the Rev. Ben Chavis of the United Church of Christ's Commission for Racial Justice at a press conference following the meeting. Chavis, who was a member of Clinton's transition team, contended that church leaders have not had such broad access since the administration of President Lyndon Johnson.

Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning of the Episcopal Church spoke of his frequent trips to the Middle East and underscored the urgent need for peace talks that include justice for the Palestinians. "I told him that violence was hindering the peace process and that the voice of moderate Palestinians was being lost, the delegation was being marginalized," Browning said later in an interview. "At this point the Palestinians have nothing to show for their involvement in the peace process." Browning proposed an Eminent Persons Group under the sponsorship of the National Council of Churches that could travel to the area and report its findings directly to the president. (Page 5)

93056D

Church activists discover 'new receptiveness' in Washington

Members of a coalition of social justice advocates from across the United States who focus on public policy legislation on behalf of the religious community say that they are adjusting to a surprising receptiveness of their

ideas from the new faces in the White House and on Capitol Hill.

"There is a new atmosphere of cooperation that has excited many people who work on public policy issues in Washington and elsewhere," said Betty Coats, a staff officer at the Washington Office of the Episcopal Church. Coats recently attended the 21st annual briefing of Interfaith/IMPACT, a national network of persons who are interested in implementing the public policy resolutions of their faith groups. The March 15-18 meeting drew 350 persons from the Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish and Muslim traditions.

Coats said that the new administration has already exhibited a willingness to adopt legislative initiatives that members of Interfaith/IMPACT have supported for a long time. She cited the adoption of the Family and Medical Leave Act and support for full funding of the Head Start program and universal childhood immunization as examples of new cooperation between government and public policy advocates. (Page 7)

93057D

Religious leaders issue urgent appeal in support of Salvadoran Truth Commission

Episcopal Church leaders in the United States and El Salvador have issued an urgent appeal supporting the recommendations of a UN-sponsored commission that recently investigated human rights abuses during El Salvador's 12-year civil war.

The commission's report, which followed an eight-month investigation, was described by diplomats and human rights advocates as a historic step toward reconciliation in the Central American nation wracked by violence and more than 75,000 deaths during the civil war. The commission recommended deep changes in the Salvadoran military, a sweeping overhaul of the country's judicial system and a special investigation into right-wing death squads.

Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning expressed hope that the commission's report "will stand as a model to the world, and let all brutal regimes know that we will never rest until the truth is told and the horrors exposed and the guilty brought to justice." Echoing Browning's call for justice, Salvadoran Bishop Martin Barahona urged President Bill Clinton to "be involved in the peace process and reconciliation," during a recent news conference of church leaders and human rights activists at the Episcopal Church Center in New York on the 13th anniversary of the martyrdom of Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero. (Page 8)

93058D

New denomination consecrates former Episcopal priests as bishops

Retired Episcopal Bishop Donald Davies and bishops of so-called "continuing churches" consecrated two bishops for the recently formed Episcopal Missionary Church (EMC) in Oklahoma City on March 26, closing a chapter in a protracted struggle between a group of traditionalists and the Episcopal Church.

Davies and the bishops consecrated the Rev. S. Patrick Murphy of Houston and the Rev. Leo Combes of Richmond, Virginia--both former Episcopal priests who had renounced their orders. According to a press release issued by the EMC, eight bishops representing five different "continuing Anglican jurisdictions" participated in the laying on of hands for the new bishops, which was held before a congregation of 250 people in a Roman Catholic pastoral center in Oklahoma City.

The consecration of bishops for the new denomination opened a new chapter for the group of traditionalists that had originally tried to form a nongeographic diocese within the Episcopal Church. The organization, known as the Missionary Diocese of the Americas (MDA), was comprised of small parishes of formerly unchurched persons and inactive or disgruntled Episcopalians. The MDA was never canonically recognized in the Episcopal Church. Davies was elected presiding bishop of the EMC last fall after he resigned his ministry in the Episcopal Church. (Page 10)

93059D

Consultation will set ecumenical agenda for the future

The Episcopal Church will sit down with its ecumenical partners next fall for a consultation to test its ecumenical experience and set an agenda for the future. Under the theme, "Ecumenism of the Possible: Witness, Theology and the Future Church," the five-day meeting in October will explore the Anglican understanding of the church and its challenges, seek fresh possibilities for visible unity in "one eucharistic fellowship...a communion of communions" in dialogue with other Christian traditions and test the church's findings against both ecumenical experience in dioceses and parishes--and the Faith and Order movement."

"The purpose of the consultation is not to solve the problems we are

facing but to set an agenda for the future," said the Rev. William Norgren, ecumenical officer for the Episcopal Church. He pointed out that the church's Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations (SCER), sponsor of the consultation, will take the "questions, definitions, recommendations and directions" from the consultation and "discern what this may mean for the General Convention, dioceses and their diocesan ecumenical officers, and the Anglican Communion," according to the prospectus for the meeting.

The consultation was authorized by the 1991 General Convention, which asked SCER for "an explicit examination of ecclesiology in each of our dialogues" and a testing of those issues "against actual experience" at the local level. (Page 12)

93055

Church leaders meet with President Clinton, hail new openness to their concerns

by James Solheim

A group of the nation's top religious leaders met March 24 with President Bill Clinton and emerged from the hour-long meeting clearly buoyed by what they characterized as a new openness to the church's moral agenda.

"This president has made himself and his administration accessible to us and to others," said the Rev. Ben Chavis of the United Church of Christ's Commission for Racial Justice at a press conference following the meeting. Chavis, who was a member of Clinton's transition team, contended that church leaders have not had such broad access since the administration of President Lyndon Johnson.

Clinton told the church leaders they would find a welcome in every agency of his administration, asking the top officers of the 14 Protestant and five Orthodox bodies to "share your insights and tell me what you think is important." He said that, in addition to contributing to the moral and ethical dialogue of the nation, the churches possess experience both at home and abroad that the government needs. "He sees us as a resource," said the Rev. Joan Brown Campbell, general secretary of the National Council of Churches (NCC) and leader of the delegation.

After opening prayers, Clinton urged the 44 church leaders to support his economic stimulus package and then he turned to Campbell for an opening statement. Campbell asked several of the church leaders to address issues of special concern to their denominations.

Browning urges justice for Palestinians

Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning of the Episcopal Church spoke of his frequent trips to the Middle East and underscored the urgent need for peace talks that include justice for the Palestinians. "I told him that violence was hindering the peace process and that the voice of the moderate Palestinians was being lost, the delegation was being marginalized," Browning said later in an interview. "At this point the Palestinians have nothing to show for their involvement in the peace process."

Browning proposed an Eminent Persons Group under the sponsorship of the NCC that could travel to the area and report its findings directly to the president. Clinton acknowledged the delicacy of present negotiations and said

he would consider the presiding bishop's proposal.

Belle Miller McMaster, director of the social justice and peacemaking unit of the Presbyterian Church (USA), also spoke of the global concerns of the churches--especially the hopes for peace in the Middle East and the Balkans, justice for Central America and parts of Asia, and food for the hungry in Africa. Stressing the long-term commitment to partner churches overseas, she told Clinton that "our relationships are for decades." Therefore the churches would be good resources for the government as it shapes its international policies, she argued.

Metropolitan Theodosius, primate of the Orthodox Church in America with historical ties to Russia, delivered a personal letter from Patriarch Alexi of Moscow and All Russia expressing appreciation for U.S. support for democratic movements in Russia.

Partners for change

Bishop Melvin Talbert, secretary of the United Methodist Council of Bishops, recalled that the president had been elected on a platform of change. "For that change to take place, all of us will need to be involved. And we pledge the support of the churches, support that can play a significant ethical and moral role. Together we can rebuild our country," he said.

After the meeting, Talbert said the president was "a man of great integrity and spiritual strength," adding that he was convinced that the church leaders could use their persuasion to "create a climate for change."

In his concluding comments the president said that feeding and housing people, providing meaningful jobs and learning to accept diversity as a strength and not a weakness are not only domestic problems but world issues as well. "These are problems of the spirit," Clinton said, "that can best be met through a partnership between the churches and those of us in public service."

"This is a new day," said the Rev. Syngman Rhee, a Presbyterian mission official who is president of the NCC. He and other church leaders said that they left the White House convinced that the new administration, unlike many previous administrations, shared a common agenda and a common determination to "make our national life better," in the words of Campbell.

--J. Martin Bailey of the NCC contributed to this article.

93056

Church activists discover 'new receptiveness' in Washington

by Jeffrey Penn

Members of a coalition of social justice advocates from across the United States who focus on public policy legislation on behalf of the religious community say that they are adjusting to a surprising receptiveness of their ideas from the new faces in the White House and on Capitol Hill.

"There is a new atmosphere of cooperation that has excited many people who work on public policy issues in Washington and elsewhere," said Betty Coats, a staff officer at the Washington Office of the Episcopal Church. Coats said that she noticed a marked change from the time of the inauguration of the new administration. "I think that there is a shift because the new administration is taking initiative on issues important to us in the religious community."

Coats recently attended the 21st annual briefing of Interfaith/IMPACT, a national network of persons who are interested in implementing the public resolutions of their faith groups. The March 15-18 meeting drew 350 persons from the Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish and Muslim traditions.

Strengthening the voice

"Although each denomination or faith community has its own identity," Coats said, "there is great similarity in their official positions on public policy issues. Interfaith/IMPACT brings the communities together and tries to strengthen the voice."

Participants at the Interfaith/IMPACT briefing welcomed several members of Congress who spoke on specific pieces of legislation, including health care reform, environmental policy, trade policy, welfare reform, American Indian religious freedom, and the ban on lesbians and gays in the military.

Coats said that the new administration has already exhibited a willingness to adopt legislative initiatives that members of Interfaith/IMPACT have supported for a long time. She cited the adoption of the Family and Medical Leave Act and support for full funding of the Head Start program and universal childhood immunization as examples of new cooperation between government and public policy advocates.

Learning to be more collaborative

Coats reported that the new openness by the Clinton Administration toward policy statements of church groups will require some "new thinking" by the activists in those groups. "In the past there was tension and conflict over policy matters. The advocates will have to learn to be more collaborative. We'll need to reexamine our tactics," she said.

In their attempt to be more collaborative, one member of the briefing warned that activists might have to compromise in the rough-and-tumble world of Washington politics. Elanora Giddings Ivory, director of the Washington Office for the Presbyterian Church (USA), said that "at some point, in order to get legislation passed, we are going to be asked to compromise. That will be the hard decision--how far do we go to compromise our values?" she asked.

93057

Religious leaders issue urgent appeal in support of Salvadoran Truth Commission

by Jeffrey Penn

Episcopal Church leaders in the United States and El Salvador have issued an urgent appeal supporting the recommendations of a UN-sponsored commission that recently investigated human rights abuses during El Salvador's 12-year civil war.

The special commission, known as the Truth Commission, was set up as part of the peace accord signed by the Salvadoran government and rebel forces last fall. The commission's report, released on March 15, was described by diplomats and human rights advocates as a historic step toward reconciliation in the Central American nation wracked by violence and more than 75,000 deaths during the civil war.

Following an eight-month investigation that included extensive testimony of more than 20,000 Salvadorans, the commission recommended deep changes in the Salvadoran military, a sweeping overhaul of the country's judicial system and a special investigation into right-wing death squads.

Among the cases investigated by the commission were the murders of Archbishop Oscar Romero in 1980, four U.S. church women in 1980, and six

Jesuit priests and two women in 1989, as well as a 1981 massacre of hundreds of civilians in the Salvadoran town of El Mozote. The report named government officials and military leaders who were responsible for the atrocities and recommended that they be removed immediately from public office and barred from holding office for at least 10 years.

Truth more powerful than bullets

Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning of the Episcopal Church, which includes the Diocese of El Salvador, called the report "a beacon." In a March 17 statement read at a New York news conference commemorating the 13th anniversary of the death of Romero, Browning asserted that the report proved that "truth can be more powerful than bullets and death squads." The news conference was sponsored by the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), an advocacy organization.

Browning expressed hope that the commission's report "will stand as a model to the world and let all brutal regimes know that we will never rest until the truth is told and the horrors exposed and the guilty brought to justice."

Echoing Browning's call for justice during the news conference with church leaders and human rights activists at the Episcopal Church Center, Salvadoran Bishop Martin Barahona urged President Bill Clinton to "be involved in the peace process and reconciliation."

"The church has been calling for forgiveness," Barahona added, "but we have also been exhorted to search for the truth. We trust that the people of El Salvador will continue on the way of reconciliation," Barahona said. "It is not an easy task, but the only way to reconciliation is forgiveness."

Time for justice

In San Salvador, President Alfredo Cristiani and leaders of his political party have called for a general amnesty for persons responsible for past atrocities. Opposition leaders and human rights activists immediately criticized Cristiani's proposal.

Describing the amnesty as the "greatest tragedy," Bishop Sir Paul Reeves, the Anglican Observer at the United Nations, asserted at the news conference that "no effort has been made to respond the serious recommendations made by the [Truth] Commission to correct the systemic injustices that have characterized the political life of El Salvador for so long."

"We call on our government to pressure President Cristiani to reverse his decision...," said Michael Lent of CISPES. "Now is not the time for amnesty, it is the time for justice," Lent added. "National reconciliation will only happen if the impugnity is ended and these crimes are never allowed to

happen again."

U.S. policy supported 'disgrace of history'

Following the report of the Truth Commission, several members of the U.S. Congress have called for an investigation into U.S. financial and military support for the Salvadoran government during the civil war. The chairman of the House subcommittee on foreign affairs, Rep. Robert Toricelli (D-NJ), suggested that Reagan administration officials may have lied to Congress and covered up abuses by the Salvadoran military in order to gain congressional approval of \$6 billion in aid during the 1980s.

Browning described the 12 years of violence and civil war in El Salvador a "disgrace of history," and strongly criticized the longstanding support by the United States for Salvadoran governments that perpetrated the violence. "How shameful it is that the United States, the world's champion of democracy, provided the weapons for this slaughter and the training for the perpetrators of these heinous crimes," Browning said.

"The Reagan and Bush administrations were responsible for withholding crucial information about human rights abuses, not pursuing information about human rights atrocities and thwarting investigations into them," Lent charged.

On March 24, Secretary of State Warren Christopher appointed a panel to review charges that State Department officials may have been involved in misleading Congress.

Browning said that an investigation and, where appropriate, prosecution of U.S. officials involved in lying to Congress and covering up the atrocities should be conducted "for the sake of our own national soul."

93058

New denomination consecrates former Episcopal priests as bishops

by Jeffrey Penn

Retired Episcopal Bishop Donald Davies and bishops of so-called "continuing churches" consecrated two bishops for the recently formed Episcopal Missionary Church (EMC) in Oklahoma City on March 26, closing

a chapter in a protracted struggle between a group of traditionalists and the Episcopal Church.

To fulfill an apostolic tradition that requires the participation of three bishops in the consecration of new bishops, Davies was assisted by two co-consecrators--the Rev. Robert Kennaugh and the Rev. Stephen Clark, bishops of the Anglican Rite Jurisdiction of America, one of the so-called "continuing churches."

Davies and the bishops consecrated the Rev. S. Patrick Murphy of Houston and the Rev. Leo Combes of Richmond, Virginia--both former Episcopal priests who had renounced their orders.

According to a press release issued by the EMC, eight bishops representing five different "continuing Anglican jurisdictions" participated in the laying on of hands for the new bishops, which was held before a congregation of 250 people in a Roman Catholic retreat center in Oklahoma City.

'Faithful remnant'

The EMC, formed when Davies and other traditionalists bolted from the Episcopal Church last November, is the latest of several groups that have separated over matters of polity, policy and resistance to changes that have occurred in the Episcopal Church, such as revision of the Book of Common Prayer and the ordination of women to the priesthood. Officials within the EMC report that it includes about 30 parishes nationwide.

In an interview with a reporter, Davies described the EMC as "the faithful remnant who are clinging to the basic teachings of our church and our Lord," in contrast to the Episcopal Church which, he said, has sold out to cultural norms. "We decided there was no future for us [in the Episcopal Church]...so we declared our independence."

MDA was never canonically recognized

The consecration of bishops for the new denomination opened a new chapter for the group of traditionalists that had originally tried to form a nongeographic diocese within the Episcopal Church. The organization, known as the Missionary Diocese of the Americas (MDA), was comprised of small parishes of formerly unchurched persons and inactive or disgruntled Episcopalians. The MDA was never canonically recognized in the Episcopal Church.

In a November 18 letter to Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning, Davies explained the reason for his departure, citing Episcopal Church canons for "abandonment of the communion...by a bishop" who formally joins a

religious body not in communion with the Episcopal Church. In a December 18 letter, Browning formally suspended Davies as a bishop. According to Episcopal Church canons, Davies will likely be deposed by the Episcopal Church's House of Bishops if he does not reverse his decision to leave the church within six months of the date he was suspended.

Davies was criticized throughout the Episcopal Church when he crossed diocesan boundaries to minister to MDA parishes without permission of local Episcopal bishops--an act that violates Episcopal Church canons. Davies admitted that the dispute was a significant factor in his eventual departure from the church. "I was breaking the canons of the Episcopal Church, which did bother me," he told reporters.

The former bishop of Dallas, first bishop of Fort Worth and director of the MDA, Davies was a retired bishop in good standing in the Episcopal Church when he broke ranks and formed the new denomination. He was elected presiding bishop of the EMC at the time of its formation last fall.

--based on a report by Pat Gilliland of the *Daily Oklahoman*

93059

Consultation will set ecumenical agenda for the future

by James Solheim

The Episcopal Church will sit down with its ecumenical partners next fall for a consultation to test its ecumenical experience and set an agenda for the future.

Under the theme, "Ecumenism of the Possible: Witness, Theology and the Future Church," the five-day meeting in October will explore the Anglican understanding of the church and its challenges, seek fresh possibilities for visible unity in "one eucharistic fellowship...a communion of communions" in dialogue with other Christian traditions and test the church's findings against both ecumenical experience in dioceses and parishes--and the Faith and Order movement."

"The purpose of the consultation is not to solve the problems we are

facing but to set an agenda for the future," said the Rev. William Norgren, ecumenical officer for the Episcopal Church. He pointed out that the church's Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations (SCER), sponsor of the consultation, will take the "questions, definitions, recommendations and directions" from the consultation and "discern what this may mean for the General Convention, dioceses and their diocesan ecumenical officers, and the Anglican Communion," according to the prospectus for the meeting.

Testing issues against experience

The consultation was authorized by the 1991 General Convention, which asked SCER for "an explicit examination of ecclesiology in each of our dialogues" and a testing of those issues "against actual experience" at the local level.

Among the partners invited will be Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, United Methodist, Reformed (Presbyterians and United Church of Christ), Disciples, Church of the Brethren, historic black churches, Old Catholic, Reformed Episcopal and perhaps Evangelicals.

Small groups will examine the major documents that have emerged from ecumenical conversations and then look at obstacles that persist in relationships with each of the traditions. Major presentations by Prof. Henry Chadwick of the Church of England and Dr. Konrad Raiser, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, will provide specific challenges for the small groups.

Norgren said that the consultation will be "a real working conference" which will attempt to "pull together all of our dialogues and activities, looking for some coherence so that our efforts are seen as part of a whole."



news briefs

93060

Politics threatens to delay women priests for England

The committee of the British Parliament which must guide the legislation paving the way for the ordination of women in the Church of England has hit a political snag. Lord Templeman, chair of the Ecclesiastical Committee of the House of Commons and the House of Lords, is accused by both sides of the issue with attempts to stifle debate and "steamroller the issue through." Members of both houses said publicly that Templeman was showing "bias and ineptitude" and a lack of understanding of "the seriousness of the problem facing the church." The disarray could hold up the legislation for months, some suggest even years. Proponents of the ordination legislation were hoping Parliament would debate the issue before summer recess and the first women priests could be ordained by Christmas or early in 1994. British newspapers are suggesting that Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey, who admits he has "nailed his colors firmly to the mast" in his support of ordination for women, might be asked to appear before the committee to explain vital passages of the legislation.

New campaign launched on behalf of U.S. political prisoners

The National Council of Churches (NCC) recently issued a statement urging local congregations to develop relationships with individual U.S. political prisoners in a new interfaith "Sponsor a Prisoner Campaign." The campaign, a project of the NCC's Racial Justice Working Group, is part of a larger Interfaith Prisoners of Conscience Project that advocates on behalf of the more than 100 identified U.S. prisoners of conscience, the statement said. "That there are political prisoners in this country seems impossible to many Americans," said Lois M. Dauway, NCC associate for inclusiveness and justice. "We are here today to make it clear to you that political prisoners and prisoners of war are part of the American reality." Campaign organizers said that U.S. political prisoners are defined as those persons imprisoned because

that U.S. political prisoners are defined as those persons imprisoned because of their political, religious or social beliefs, including Native Americans asserting their religious and treaty rights, peace activists, Puerto Rican independence advocates and African American militants for political and economic self-determination.

NCC head urges Christians, 'Get to know Muslim neighbors'

National Council of Churches (NCC) general secretary Joan Brown Campbell has called on Christians to "get to know your Muslim neighbors" and to resist generalizations and stereotypes about any people--including Muslims--in light of the arrest of several so-called "Muslim fundamentalists" in connection with the bombing at New York's World Trade Center. "We don't deny there are extremists," said Campbell, noting that "there are extremists of many different faiths, including Christian. But we must be clear that the problem is the extremism not the faith group." Campbell expressed her concern for the "very serious danger" that, in the wake of the New York bombing, "Muslims will become characterized as terrorists. It could lead to violence against people who have nothing to do with such events. We must never take the actions of a few and attribute them to a whole group of people."

Pope advises raped Bosnian women against abortion

A story in the March 16 issue of *The Tablet*, a Roman Catholic publication in England, reported that Pope John Paul II has asked Bosnian women who have conceived children after being raped to give birth to their children and not to seek abortions. The pope's request was contained in a letter that he wrote to the Archbishop of Sarajevo, Vinko Puljic. The pope said that children born out of such acts had no responsibility for the "ignoble violence" they had undergone. "As images of God," he said, "these new creatures must be respected and loved no differently from any other member of the human family."

Anglican novelist donates £1 million to theology lectureship

The University of Cambridge has received the endowment of a university lectureship in theology and natural science in the amount of £1 million over five years from the internationally known novelist Susan Howatch. Howatch made the donation because of her conviction that "science was not destroying religion, as people popularly believe," but that it could help "cast light on theism and Christianity. On this particular frontier of modern thought, science and theology are no longer seen as opposed but complementary, two aspects of one truth," she said. "Susan Howatch has pin-

pointed the importance of dialogue and mutual enrichment between theology and natural science," said Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey in response to the gift. Howatch is the author of six popular novels on the lives of three clergy families in the Church of England that have sold over 20 million copies worldwide.

Carey tells ecumenists of disappointment with Vatican

Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey told a meeting of ecumenists in Belgium that "dreams and visions seem to have faded into a mist of disappointment and a mood of resigned realism.... Anglicans cannot pretend to be anything other than disappointed by the Vatican response to the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC I)" published in 1981. Carey said that "Roman Catholics are confused and disoriented by the movement throughout Anglicanism worldwide to ordain women to the priesthood." As a result, "hopes for organic unity seem to have faded and the communion for which our Lord prayed sometimes seems as far as ever," he added. "We have to face together the awkwardness and even unacceptability of believing that baptism unites but that the Eucharist divides," Carey continued. While acknowledging that Anglicanism had become "immeasurably the richer" for its exposure to the Roman Catholic tradition of peace and justice, Carey said that Catholics could learn that "the role of representative laity in synodically governed church complements" the role of bishops. "Our tradition of tolerance, enriched by the Anglo-Saxon intellectual environment, offers a climate in which forms of theology can flourish which are both free and loyal to the tradition. And then our slow but eventual realization of the role of women within the church, both lay and ordained, does, I am convinced, point to a legitimate development within the tradition of Western Christianity," he concluded.

Sudanese caught in civil war plea for help

The two Sudanese councils of churches, separated by a decade-long civil war that has claimed an estimated 600,000 lives and uprooted millions, issued a plea for help at a mid-March meeting in Geneva, Switzerland. "The problems of the Sudan are so complex and large that the councils call upon international partners, Christians, Muslims and the world community, to assist in meeting the tremendous humanitarian needs and to seek solutions for peace," participants said in a communique following the meeting at the headquarters of the World Council of Churches. Among the points of advocacy the communique suggested were a ceasefire and "immediate cessation of wanton killing of civilians and the destruction of their property";

peace negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations, the Organization for African Unity and the Arab League; respect by both sides for basic human rights; demilitarized zones and an end to air bombardments.

Egypt's Coptic Christians under intense persecution

The surge of Islamic fundamentalism has caught in its wake the largest and one of the most ancient religious minorities in the Middle East--Egypt's 10 million Coptic Christians. Churches are being vandalized and burned, Copts are attacked and killed by roving bands, according to news reports.

Persecution of Christian Arabs has seriously diminished their social and economic participation in not only Egypt but also Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Syria, as well as among Palestinians in territories occupied by Israel. The assault against the Copts is part of a much wider strategy to bring down secular governments such as Egypt and replace them with Islamic republics like Iran. Copts are direct descendants of the original inhabitants of Egypt and the church was formed in 41 AD and was among the so-called Oriental churches that split with Rome in 451 over a theological dispute. After the Arab invasions of the seventh century, many Copts converted to Islam. Coptic leaders claim that successive Egyptian governments have sanctioned persecution and threatened their existence. Many Copts are fleeing. "They don't call it the church of martyrdom for nothing," said a judge who fled to Montreal. Some Copts criticize church leaders for buckling under and avoiding confrontation but church leaders reply that the church has gone through other periods of oppression and it must "hunker down in bad times and wait until the oppression lifts."

Boy's angle on bishop's duties

A guest organist at the recent installation of United Methodist Bishop Mary Ann Swenson in Denver reported that he "nearly fell off of the organ bench" when Swenson gathered youngsters for a children's sermon. According to organist Austin Lovelace, Swenson asked the children, "Does anyone know what a bishop does?" An eager lad who obviously enjoys the game of chess shot up his hand and proudly proclaimed, "Moves diagonally."

Former Virginia priest target of investigation

A fundraiser for the Trinity Episcopal School for the Ministry in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, is the target of a \$4 million lawsuit by a former parishioner for alleged sexual misconduct. In addition, the Rev. Byron Newell, a former assistant rector of the Falls Church in Falls Church, Virginia, is the subject of an investigation in the Diocese of Virginia that could

lead to an ecclesiastical trial. The former parishioner, identified in the lawsuit as "Jane Doe," has also named local church and diocesan officials in the lawsuit--including Virginia Bishop Peter James Lee--because of her claim that they participated in a coverup of Newell's alleged misconduct. Diocesan officials contend that they removed Newell from his pastoral role and required that he undergo extensive counseling when they initially learned of his conduct. Newell's current boss, Bishop William Frey of Trinity, said that Newell "has more than amply repaid our trust. His behavior has been above reproach."

Bishop Warner testifies on gay rights bill

Citing resolutions from the Episcopal Church's 1976, 1979, and 1985 General Conventions, Bishop Vincent Warner of the Diocese of Olympia (Western Washington), testified in favor of bill that would recognize civil rights for homosexuals in the State of Washington. "My understanding of the life of Jesus is that he stood with those who were considered outcasts in his time and demonstrated through his short life over and over again that there was no one beyond the compassion and love of God," Warner told members of the Washington House of Representatives on March 2. In support of his position, Warner quoted from the text of the 1976 General Convention resolution that stated, "The General Convention express its conviction that homosexual persons are entitled to equal protection of the laws with all other citizens, and calls upon our society to see such protection is validated."



news features

93062

Satellite technology links Episcopal cathedrals in new network

by Elizabeth Eisenstadt

Building on enthusiastic responses from Episcopalians across the country, an emerging coalition of church leaders and diocesan visionaries is planning to use celestial satellite technology as a medium for education, dialogue and witness among the earthbound faithful.

With the recent formation of the Episcopal Cathedral Teleconferencing Network (ECTN), cathedrals, Episcopal church agencies and New York's Trinity Parish have begun working cooperatively to create and transmit programs and conferences by satellite.

Cathedrals, seeking to reclaim their pre-eminent place as the focus of the church's cultural life, will serve as the primary hosts to such programs, according to Frederic Burnham, director of Trinity Institute. Accessible to groups of clergy and lay people gathered at sites across the country, these events will also offer the opportunity for participants in Maine and Montana, or even South Carolina and South Africa, to discuss common issues.

"Clearly, reaching out has always been a cathedral ministry, and this is the best and most cost-efficient way to do that," says the Rev. Clement K. Lee, director of the national church's Office of Electronic Media.

Signs of success were needed

Thanks to a formidable investment in the latest broadcast technology, an expert technical and creative staff and the leadership of rector Daniel Matthews, Trinity Parish has been one of the key players in planning and marketing the uses of this relatively new (to the Episcopal Church) medium. Trinity's video production unit was one of the driving forces behind the birth of the Vision Interfaith Satellite Network (VISN), a cable channel which offers

Trinity's video production unit was one of the driving forces behind the birth of the Vision Interfaith Satellite Network (VISN), a cable channel which offers a broad range of religious programming.

The idea was conceived last spring in conversations among Matthews, Burnham, Lee and Trinity's television director Jeff Weber, said Burnham. Burnham and Lee proposed the creation of a satellite network to the nation's cathedral deans last spring. In the fall they polled all the cathedrals and found, according to Burnham, that of the 49 that responded, 46 said that they were interested in either becoming a "downlink site" for receiving conferences or getting more information. "What people needed in order to get on board were signs of success," said Burnham.

And success, in the form of two Trinity-sponsored conferences, was close at hand. When Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey visited Washington, D.C., last September, Trinity and the Office of Electronic Media teamed up to broadcast live his keynote address at the "Values in Vocation" conference to 5,000 Episcopalians gathered at 55 downlink sites around the country. Callers from seven dioceses were also able to participate via telephone in conversation with the Archbishop.

Inspired by positive reactions from participants at home and abroad and by the ease of the actual teleconference transmission, Trinity Institute's planners decided to broadcast its entire annual two-day conference live from Trinity Parish and to make it possible for callers to engage in dialogue with the speakers.

"The Art of Conversation: Speaking of God in a Pluralistic Age" was picked up by 16 cathedrals and seven other locales, Burnham said. Each location had 15-100 in attendance added Trinity producer Linda Hanick.

Describing himself as "dumbfounded, surprised and taken aback" by the success of the conference, which went off without a technical glitch, Matthews added a note of caution. He pointed out that the Institute "wasn't done casually." It took a tremendous amount of planning and a highly trained staff. Nonetheless, "it is an event that made some phenomenal differences in the way we in the church do work, and we don't know (yet) how important it was," he added.

Common desire for learning

Six cathedrals now own satellite dishes, according to ECTN technical consultant Jack Crutchfield. The average cost for such technology is around \$5,000, he said. The ECTN coalition is about to send out a letter to all cathedrals suggesting an appropriate equipment package and answering basic questions, he added.

Aided by a grant from Trinity Parish, Trinity Cathedral in Phoenix, Arizona, purchased a satellite down-link so that it could serve as an interactive site for February's Institute. Realizing that some participants had traveled from northern California and Colorado to attend, the Trinity Cathedral team fed them, found housing for some and planned discussions between speakers. "When I turned off the two monitors, I realized how much of a community had come into being through the combination of technology and a common desire for learning," said the Rev. David Keller, canon at Trinity Cathedral. In a comment echoed by others who participated in the Trinity Institute experiment, Keller added: "Even our most vocal skeptics had a conversion experience."

The Phoenix cathedral has since played host to a congregational promotion planning conference produced by the United Methodist Church, according to diocesan communications director Nan Ross. The diocese hopes to record programs from the VISN channel, not available in much of Arizona, and to collaborate with institutions such as the Claremont School of Theology in California as it acquires the capacity to broadcast its own programs, Keller said.

Community of moral discourse

Other church-related institutions are interested in exploring the possibilities. General Theological Seminary's dean-elect, Bishop Craig Anderson, dreams of a collaborative program designed by New York's theological institutions of higher learning focused on contemporary cultural issues. Although the demand for theological education to equip lay people for ministry has already been proven by programs like Education for Ministry (EFM), local parishes could also make use of the seminary's resources to explore such issues in depth, Anderson said. "The service that the larger church could provide is to help raise those questions so that the church could be, at the local level, the community of moral discourse," he added.

At the Episcopal Church Center, Preston Kelsey, executive director of the Board of Theological Education (BTE), said that his office has long been concerned that Episcopalians are not making enough use of their seminaries. On the drawing board for next winter is a four-part series, created by a seminary yet to be decided, for groups of clergy gathered at cathedrals with downlink capabilities on a topic Kelsey describes as "of serious theological interest." While the BTE is the "catalyst for this initial project," Kelsey hopes that seminaries and dioceses will soon take over, making their own plans for interactive theological education.

Unique opportunity

Lee, who has worked with cathedrals and other church agencies buying or renting satellite equipment, said that satellite communications offers possibilities for all kinds of outreach projects, from AIDS ministries to adult education. At Washington's National Cathedral, staff are in the midst of strategic planning for the next decade that will include creating programs for use by dioceses and parishes. "We have access to people who are deeply involved in the cathedral and in the leadership of this nation. It's a unique opportunity and a unique responsibility," said Robert Becker, director of public affairs at the cathedral.

Excited as he is about the new openings for conversations between church leaders and people in the pew, one cathedral dean offered a caveat. A cathedral offers the "perfect" home for satellite-based conversation, "as long as it doesn't become the new Gospel, and as long as it serves and does not become the master," said Dean John Hardwick of the Diocese of Pennsylvania.

--Elizabeth Eisenstadt is a freelance writer in Washington, DC.

93063

Russian priest dreams of a restored military chaplaincy

by Jan Nunley

Looking out over the assembled Army Reserve troops based in Bristol, Rhode Island, Fr. Sergei Melnikas cut a distinctive figure in his *riasa*, the Russian Orthodox cassock. He had come that gray Saturday morning at the invitation of the reserve unit's chaplain, 1st Lt. William C. Thomas, to observe the reservists in action and to talk with them about the quest that brought him to America and a year at the General Theological Seminary (GTS) in New York: the search for information about Russia's Czarist-era military chaplains and the chance that he might restore the chaplaincy to the current Russian armed forces.

The weather played havoc with the day's schedule but Fr. Sergei took

it in stride, says Thomas, who is also rector of St. Mark's Episcopal Church in nearby Warren. "He met enough people, he had a pretty good feel for what the reserve component does in our Army. But he also took credit for the storm. 'I bring you a taste of Russia,' he told me."

Curiosity about the cross

The 31-year-old Fr. Sergei, like many Russians of his generation, found faith by accident. He happened to be born in Sergiev Posad (formerly Zagorsk), the most important religious site in Russian Orthodoxy, the shrine of St. Sergius. "In Russia, many people became believers like me, when we became adults. My way was not the way of Apostle Paul--you know, suddenly, *boom!* and I'm believer. My way was like the way of Apostle Peter--sometimes yes, sometimes no," he chuckled. "When I look up, I see the cross. I have a question--what is it? And because in the monastery we have also a seminary and academy, I met some students and they helped me."

Following the mandatory two-year stint in the Red Army, Fr. Sergei went back to his hometown seminary for what he described simply as a religious education--"I didn't think about priesthood, at first"--but he later sought Holy Orders, and was ordained in 1988. He served the Bishop of Vladimir as a private secretary and a priest of the cathedral.

After a trip to Canterbury and London's Lambeth Palace in 1989, Fr. Sergei decided he would study English and pursue an advanced degree at the Moscow Theological Academy. His goal? To travel to America, to find the material he was unable to locate in Russian archives about military chaplaincies before the 1917 Revolution.

"After the Revolution, many people emigrated from Russia to Western Europe and America," he explained. "In New York public libraries there are many books about Russian history, the military and the church, and in the Columbia (University) archives there is very interesting material about Russian military chaplaincy." He has even met some Russian emigres who served as priests to troops during the Second World War, under Stalin--the dictator's reluctant acknowledgement of the power of the spiritual in wartime.

A piece of lost history

What Fr. Sergei has discovered is a fascinating piece of his country's lost history. In a paper soon to be published in the *Military Chaplains Review*, he painted a vivid picture of the way the spiritual needs of soldiers were met in the Imperial Russian Army and Navy. Surprisingly, the Russian military chaplaincy was not exclusively Russian Orthodox. "There were also Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Old Believer chaplains, as well as Jewish rabbis and

Muslim imams," he wrote. (The Old Believers were "a conservative group within the Russian Orthodox Church who objected to innovations in ritual and split apart in the later 17th century.")

The Russian Orthodox "regiment-priests" or "ship-priests," as they were called, answered to a dean at the division level and ultimately to the "Protopresbyter of Army and Navy Priesthood." No formal military rank was assigned to the military priest; he wore his cassock, not a uniform, and he was a non-combatant--although Fr. Sergei has found several heroic stories of priests who rallied their troops and saved the day for the Czar's forces. "Although the Russian army technically was ready for its wars only very seldom," he noted, "it was practically always ready spiritually." But the chaplain's hearts were bent towards peace, said Fr. Sergei. "It was beyond the church's human power to stop wars, but its military chaplains carried the Word of God and the message of life even there where death was king."

If that was so, how did the Russian military capitulate to atheistic Bolshevism? Fr. Sergei doesn't have any easy answers. "The military chaplains were only priests with priestly duties, and they had no right to interfere in the internal life of the regiments or in the inter-relations between soldiers, officers and commanders," he pointed out. Political matters were the province of the government and the police, not the church--even though it was a priest who led workers in the 1905 revolt that prefigured the Bolshevik triumph.

Chaplains are replaced after revolution

Yet soldiers and sailors were not immune to the winds of intellectual ferment in the early years of the 20th century or to the suffering brought on by Russia's losses in World War I. After the collapse of the monarchy in 1917, the provisional government's prime minister, Alexander Kerensky, allowed revolutionary leaders to "preach" to the troops: "There is no God. Down with the church and priests. The people can do everything."

When the Red Army emerged in 1918, chaplains were replaced by political *kommissars*, part social worker, part propagandist. Only during the extremes of the war against Hitler on Russian soil did Stalin bend to the spiritual needs of his people; after the war, new restrictions were placed on the church and the chaplains once again disappeared from the ranks.

The Gorbachev years brought a relaxation of those barriers. In fact, one of the last acts of the Gorbachev administration was to ask the Russian Orthodox Patriarchate to supply military chaplains again. "They did it," noted Dr. J. Robert Wright of the GTS, who is adviser to Fr. Sergei, "because of the pressure from the troops who wanted to worship God."

Wright said that Fr. Sergei's research could be instrumental in reestablishing a Russian Orthodox chaplaincy steeped in Russia's historical tradition, but with an eye towards the more pluralistic American model--a necessity with Russia's growing population of evangelicals and the still-strong influence of state atheism. But Wright agreed with Fr. Sergei that it won't be easy, given the economic conditions in Russia. "The church has no money and neither does the government," Fr. Sergei said.

Changes on the home front

Fr. Sergei has spent plenty of time on the road during his year in America, studying and talking to the U.S. military, showing slides to illustrate the role of chaplains in pre-revolutionary Soviet Union. He has visited Orthodox chaplains at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma, and been a guest at the service academies at Annapolis and West Point. Just after his Rhode Island trip, he traveled to Washington to spend a day with the chiefs of chaplains of the Armed Forces. And he's scheduled to return to the capital in mid-May to address the East Coast conference of Episcopal Chaplains.

Even with all that excitement, Fr. Sergei keeps a concerned eye on the news from home. "I sometimes speak with my wife"--he also has two daughters, ages 6 and 3--"and she tells me we have many changes now for some months, while I'm here."

Wright says that Fr. Sergei, the first of five Russian Orthodox exchange students in Episcopal seminaries, is "a symbol of the increasingly important link between his church and ours." Wright said that Fr. Sergei is both eager to return to his family but also apprehensive about the turbulence and uncertainty Russia is facing. "He has learned much in his time here in America but his life commitment is to his own church and his own country. And he is ready to make an immense contribution to both," Wright added.

--Jan Nunley is a freelance writer who lives in Bristol, Rhode Island.



reviews and resources

93064

Episcopal Women's Caucus announces annual gathering

A Call to Solidarity is the theme of this year's Episcopal Women's Caucus (EWC) annual gathering, to be held October 1-2, 1993 at the Stockton Inn in Stockton, California. According to a recent announcement, *A Call to Solidarity* will "witness to the repression and isolation that women and men experience in so-called 'traditionalist' dioceses and those dominated by the Episcopal Synod of America; where the gifts and aspirations of lay and ordained women are not recognized or utilized; where rejection occurs if one resists sexual oppression or disagrees with the 'conscience' of the hierarchy; and where connections with the mainstream of the Episcopal Church are very restricted." The annual gathering welcomes all men and women "who support the religious integrity of women in the Episcopal Church." For more information, write the Episcopal Women's Caucus, Post Office Box 5172, Laurel, MD 20726-5172.

Renewing Anglicanism: theme for SEAD conference

Scholarly Engagement with Anglican Doctrine (SEAD) has announced its annual conference *Renewing Anglicanism: the Case for Dynamic Orthodoxy*, to be held on April 15-17, 1993 at the Virginia Theological Seminary. The conference will feature several internationally known speakers: Dr. Paul Avis, parish priest in the Diocese of Exeter and a leading Anglican scholar within the Church of England, whose works include *Anglicanism and the Christian Church*; Dr. Ellen Davis, professor of Old Testament studies at Yale and author of *Swallowing the Scroll*, presently working on the theology of classical Anglican preaching; and Dr. Os Guinness, freelance writer and lecturer, and author of the highly acclaimed new study of American society and religion, *The American Hour*. SEAD's conference will offer clergy, scholars and laypeople the opportunity to listen, learn and pray together. The conference registration fee is \$50. For a conference brochure or for further information

registration fee is \$50. For a conference brochure or for further information call Jeanette Randolph Rollins at (703) 519-0738 or write to SEAD, c/o Virginia Theological Seminary, Seminary Post Office, Alexandria, VA 22304.

Women in Mission and Ministry announces tour of China

The Episcopal Church's Office of Women in Mission and Ministry (WIMM) has announced the Women-to-Women Program's 1993 Tour to the People's Republic of China from September 19-October 6, 1993. Led by Carole Jan Lee, a Chinese-American Episcopalian from San Francisco whose friends will be on hand to greet the travelers, the trip will include a visit to the Great Wall, a tour of the Forbidden City and the Temple of Heaven, visits to arts and crafts workshops, and visits to women in their workplaces. According to Ann Smith, director of WIMM, the purpose of the trip is "networking, consciousness-raising and advocacy. We want to go beyond the political myths to the human level, putting women in touch with those who are oppressed." The tour will include the cities of Shanghai, Beijing, Hangzhou, Suzhou and Xian. The approximate total cost of the trip is \$3,000 from San Francisco and the group is limited to 30. For more information contact Carole Jan Lee, 152 20th Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94121-1308, phone (415) 668-3473.

Photos available in this issue of ENS:

1. Memory of Romero inspires hope for Salvador (93057)
2. President Clinton welcomes church leaders to White House meeting (93055)
3. Browning presses Palestinian cause at White House meeting (93055)
4. Russian priest studies U.S. Military chaplaincy (93063)
5. Satellite network links cathedrals (93062)

Tentative mailing dates for future ENS releases are April 15 and 29.

